

EVALUATION OF LOCAL GOVERNANCE PERFORMANCE IN DEALING WITH DISASTER RISK REDUCTION: CASE STUDY OF THREE DDMA'S OF SINDH

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Abstract

This study evaluates the role, capacity and performance of the local governance in disaster risk reduction (hereafter DRR) in Sindh. The study was conducted in randomly selected three districts namely Dadu, Thatta and Shahdadkot from the list of the most flood affected districts of Sindh with a view to understand and examine issues in local governance in DRR. The study used qualitative and quantitative tools. Empirical evidence shows poor performance of the government authorities in all phases of DRR. The local governments or DDMA's miserably failed in performing the role envisioned for them under the Hyogo Framework of Action (HFA hereafter) and the National Disaster Management Authority Act 2010. The findings further show that in all three districts, the government that could have responded to the floods, recovery and rehabilitation of flood affected people, reconstruction of infrastructure and people's lives and their prosperities did not exist.

Key words: Local Governance, Disaster Risk Reduction, National and District Management Authorities (NDMA/DDMA) and Hyogo Framework of Action.

1. Introduction

The Indus River overflowed due to heavy monsoon rains in 2010-2011, flooded 78 of 141 districts, and affected 18 to 20 million people in Pakistan. The floods were so severe and massive that they raise the number of flood affected people from 1.5 million to 18 million people over all of whom 14 million were vulnerable and required urgent assistance (OXFAM, 2010/2011). During the heavy rains, almost 2000 people died and 2964 people were injured. The flood tore down bridges, destroyed roads, submerged markets, flattened public buildings, wiped out electricity stations and devastated 2.4 million hectares of cultivatable land. Over 1.6 million homes, 430 health facilities and an estimated 10,000 schools were either damaged or destroyed.

The phenomenon of repeated disasters has unfolded the issue of local governance in disaster risk reduction.¹ The local governance/district governments' role has been more pronounced in the disaster prone areas of Sindh in the wake of the recent floods. But the issue is, how far the district governments are capable, sensitized and equipped to play their expected roles in DRR. Understanding of the DDMA's in local context is important because these are the lowest tiers and grassroots units in the disaster risk reduction governance in Pakistan. These institutions are important because they have direct connection with local communities and are responsible to build among others the disaster risk reduction capacities of the local communities. However, these institutions are weak because they have not been accepted as one of the district level departments with separate budget and staff. There are also overlapping of roles and responsibilities of all tiers of governance of DRR, no clear role and responsibility of the line departments at district level and absence of local governance system appropriate to implement the guidelines enshrined in National Disaster Management Act, 2010.²

¹ For further details on Local Government Act 2013, see UNDP
http://www.pk.undp.org/content/pakistan/en/home/library/hiv_aids/development-advocate-pakistan/local-government-acts-2013-and-province-local-government-relatio.html

² Financial and administrative powers vested with national and provincial authorities while execution of DRR plans are carried out by district authorities.

The present study was conducted in three districts of Sindh namely Dadu, Thatta and Shahdadkot. The objective of the paper was to evaluate the performance of district government in dealing with 2010 and 2011 floods. Both qualitative and quantitative tools were employed for conducting the study. Qualitative tools consisted of key Informant Interviews (KII hereafter), Focused Group Discussion (FGDs hereafter) and individual Interviews. One KII was conducted with officials of District Coordination Office and Health, Education and Social Welfare departments in all three districts. Similarly four FGDs were conducted in each of the three districts with the flood affected villagers. Civil society opinion was gauged by conducting informal interviews with NGO workers in each district.

The results indicate poor performance of the government authorities in all phases of DRR. The local governments or DDMAAs were unable to play their role as envisioned for them under the Hyogo Framework of Action (HFA hereafter) and the National Disaster Management Authority Act 2010. Hence, we conclude that in all three district, the government did not exist that could have prepared itself to respond to the floods, recovery and rehabilitation of flood affected people, reconstruction of infrastructure and people's lives and their prosperities.

The rest of the paper proceeds as: Section 2 discusses HFA and in section 3 research methodology is outlined. Findings of the study are given in section 4 which include: role of NGOs, INGOs and other institutions in section 4.1, community response regarding disaster governance and management in section 4.2, losses in floods in 4.3, early information/warning and training and disaster preparedness in section 4.4 and 4.5 respectively. Conclusive analysis of the finding is provided in section 5 and section 6 provides policy recommendations.

2. Hyogo Framework of Action

The United Nations convened second World Conference on DRR in Kobe, Hyogo Japan in 2005. In the conference, HFA 2005-2015 was adopted by 168 countries. The HFA dealt with Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities prone to Disasters (see UN, 2015 for women's role in disaster risk reduction). It shifted focus from post disaster response to a more comprehensive approach that also included prevention and preparedness measures (World Metrological Organization). The HFA was adopted just a few weeks after the Indian Ocean Tsunami. It is a comprehensive plan describes and details the work required from

all stakeholders to minimize disaster losses. The HFA emphasizes the importance of government, international agencies, disaster experts and many other actors in reducing disaster risk and brings them in a common system of coordination. It outlines five priorities for action³ and offers guiding principles and practical means for achieving disaster resilience. Its goal is to substantially reduce disaster losses by 2015 by building the resilience of nations and communities to disasters. It aims at ensuring reduction of loss of lives and social, economic, and environmental assets when hazards strike (UN Office for DRR). Efforts are being made globally and in different countries to fulfil the commitment made under Hyogo framework for Action (see UNISDR; The UN office for disaster risk reduction for mid-term review). Pakistan is among 168 signatories of the HFA and the National Disaster Management Authority Act (2010) is the focal point for implementing HFA guidelines.⁴

3. Research Methodology

The study was conducted in three districts of Sindh. It utilized primary and secondary sources consisting of following qualitative and quantitative approaches:

(a) Primary Source of Information: It consisted of review of UN, Government and NGO reports. In addition news reports, laws, policies, plan of actions by the government and other relevant stakeholders were also reviewed.

(b) Key Informant Interviews: In light of the objectives of the study, a check list of topics was prepared for individual informal interviews with government officials with District Commissioner Office, Health, Education, Social Welfare departments and DDMA's. Also 5 individual informal interviews were conducted with NGO workers. They were asked about the role of District Disaster Management Authorities and help they offered local communities to cope up with disasters and hurdles they and communities faced or are facing in their support for making resilient communities. Most of the officers were unable and reluctant to share documents and financial statements related to emergency activities in their respective districts.

³ (1) Ensure that disaster risk reduction is a national and a local priority with a strong institutional basis for implementation. (2) Identify, assess and monitor disaster risk Kamber Shahdadt and enhance early warning. (3) Use knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels. (4) Reduce the underlying risk factors. (5) Strengthen disaster preparedness for effective response at all levels.

⁴ Pakistan has been submitting progress reports regularly

(c) Focus Group discussions: About four FGDs were held in each district with communities that faced 2010 and 2011 floods. The local NGOs were requested to gather the communities for this purpose. In each group about 9 to 15 community people (male and female) participated. Semi controlled group discussions were held and participants were asked about the role of government department and NGOs pre, post and during the flood in their areas.

4. Findings

Literature review reveals that along with National Disaster Management Act 2010, there are various other national and provincial laws that also govern matters pertaining to disasters such as ERRA Act 2011, the Punjab Emergency Service Act 2006, the Local Governance Ordinance 2001, the National Calamities Act 1958 and Civil Defense Act 1952. In view of many acts dealing with disasters, there is acute need of harmonization of all these laws.

The empirical evidence further show that most of the NGOs working in the target districts were not satisfied with the Act's generic form. The Act does not make specific directions or orders for vulnerable groups such as children and women who greatly depend on male adults and are greatly affected in disaster like situations. Furthermore, Sindh Government restored old commissonerate system in 2011. Under this system, all administrative powers at district level rest with deputy commissioner office (Under NDMA 2010, DCO is simply the member of DDMA). The DCO is neither local nor stays longer in the area and is often transferred in a year or two. Given the additional task of DRR, the DCOs in the target areas have done little to lead and coordinate for community based sustainable DRR programming, as was shared by the NGOs members. Since the transfer of powers and more financial support three years ago, provincial government has not diverted some of the funds at local level to convert virtual dysfunctional DDMA into practical and accessible institutions with strong and effective governance and management for disasters. The District Officer (DO) Social Welfare (SW) has been acting as a focal person for the DDMA Thatta since last three years. The DO SW was personally motivated to promote and strengthen the DDMA but his counterparts in rest of the two districts lacked such vision. Lack of resources also constrained the implementation of DRR policies in target districts. Furthermore, the DO SW administratively works under the DCO which also raises serious questions on his powers to implement the NDMA plans

and policies in respective district. Despite exposure to disaster management and flood related experience, the DO SW was totally unaware of HFA. The authorities further told that there is in place District Disaster Management Plan which has been fully implemented and updated in 2013. The district has early warning system that consist of arrangements with local FM radio, trained volunteers and Molvis to make announcement from loudspeakers. The coordination among the line departments take place through meetings which are frequently called during emergencies. DDMA can assess physical or financial losses but it lacks capacity to assess impacts of disaster on different aspects of society.

Dadu DDMA is headed by Additional Deputy Commissioner - I (ADC). Although he was aware of laws related to disaster management yet he was totally unaware of HFA. ADC-I complained that he is constrained with lack of funding and trained staff to deal with disasters properly. There is a contingency plan prepared by DCO in 2008 to deal with emergencies. The contingency plan was implemented in 2010 floods and was updated in 2012 in light of the experience gained in its implementation in 2010 floods. DDMA and DCO calls meeting of all line departments for coordination purpose. One focal person from each department is nominated to respond to disaster. Despite all this, lack of proper funds, trained and motivated staff, equipment and systems definitely posed a big challenge for the DDMA,

Like Dadu, DDMA Kamber Shahdadt is also headed by ADC-II. He was aware of national legal framework and policies related to the DRR but had no complete knowledge and mandate of NDMA, PDMA and HFA. He was critical and disappointed about the capacity of DDMA and openly accepted its dysfunctional status. There is no separate allocated budget nor is staff and other required resources and tools to deal with disasters. Even they do not have a boat to visit stranded places in the district. Different sources that include FM Radio, drum beats and the announcements from the mosque loudspeakers are used to inform and warn people in disaster threatened areas. The district government has the capacity to assess the losses caused by disasters but no impact study has been conducted by the relevant authorities in the district. Also the DDMA has no capacity to record, analyze, summarize, disseminate and exchange statistical information and data on hazard mapping, disaster risks, impacts and losses. Further, the district government has taken steps to address food insecurity issue in

the district. There is an absence of mechanism that could address most disaster vulnerable sections of the society. There are no post disaster recovery centres that could mitigate the psychological damage of vulnerable populations, particularly children, in the last floods/rains. No measures for the recovery and rehabilitation of flood affected people have been taken by DDMA and district government. Even the DDMA head did not know the number of the families/persons who had been provided food, shelter in this district. The NGOs played vital role in flood affected areas in terms of relief and support during and after the disaster. The officials openly admitted incapacity of district government to deal with the disasters. It has neither funds, nor trained staff, equipment nor technical capacity.

None of the officials in all three districts provided documents about the amount allocated for emergency related activities. Even the officials did not know the funds required by their respective departments to support response, recovery and preparedness measures. However, both Thatta and Kamber Shahdadkot officials have enough stop at disposal to deal with emergencies provided they were supplied with logistics and other resources including medicines and equipment. Health departments of both districts also involved local communities to organize medical camps in the affected areas.

4.1 Role of NGOs, INGOs and other institutions

Various NGOs, INGOs and UN agencies were working in collaboration with the district health, social welfare and education departments. Most of the work was done in clusters/groups. They supported these departments in setting up medical camps, books, provided WASH facilities and tent cities, nutrition, child protection issues mainly. They also supported in establishing temporary learning centres, child protection centres and recreation spaces. Though the most of the officials in line departments of the target district could not differentiate between NGOs and INGOs yet they appreciated the role of non government organization in the recovery and rehabilitation of flood affected people. Further, most of the officials of line departments in target districts were not satisfied with the role of business community in post flood activities. Villagers also appreciated the role NGOs played in all phases of 2010 floods.

4.2 Community Response Regarding Disaster Governance and Management

Majority of the FGDs participants were critical about the government's support and role during and after the floods in 2010. They told that government did not provide any kind of support to flood affected people. The government provided only financial support worth Rs. 60,000 each in three installments through Watan Card to most of the flood affected families. However, the villagers were quite unhappy as the losses were far greater than the financial support government provided to them. The participants also told that government officials were rude and non-cooperative as well.

4.3 Losses in the Floods

The FGD participants in all three districts told that 2010 floods brought them irreparable losses. Most of the villagers had lost their homes, livestock, crops and other valuable belongings. The livelihoods were also affected badly. In most of the villages schools, roads, irrigation canals and lands were severely damaged but were not repaired till the time of the FGDs. However, at some places schools had started functioning.

4.4 Early Information/Warning and Training

Majority of the FGD participants told that they were not warned by the officials to vacate villages for safer places. In few instances, officials did told the villagers about the approaching disaster and told them to move for safer places. Yet they were neither given any support to vacate the village, nor were guided what to do in face of upcoming emergency, and where to go. The government or NGOs did not train them to protect themselves from floods, earthquakes and fires. The villagers helped each other and dealt with disasters on their own.

4.5 Disaster Preparedness

Most of the villagers told they are trained to protect themselves from emergencies. They have skills required to protect themselves and help other villagers during disasters. Many of the villagers in Thatta and Dadu had no disaster plan for their villages but they had trained village committees to deal with emergencies. Even the villagers do not have phone numbers of relevant district authorities to call for help during emergencies. The villagers do not know about

DDMA nor do they know about any focal persons to communicate with in emergencies.

5. Conclusive analysis

The dream of resilient communities and minimum (or no) loss of lives and properties is viable only if the systems, structures and institutions are in place at local/district level. The DDMA- a formal institution established under the National Disaster Management Authority Act 2010- at district level can have direct and effective coordination and relationship with vulnerable communities and groups but the DDMA yet has not been able to emerge as an institution that could deliver as given in Section 19 and 20 of the Act of 2010, and as envisaged under the HFA nor there are DRR systems and structures in place. In Pakistan, DRR is not priority of the government; hence there is no investment at local level.

The findings show that the performance of the government authorities in all phases of DRR was extremely poor as is envisioned under the HFA and the National Disaster Management Authority Act 2010. The governments departments responsible to deal with disasters and emergencies were plagued with weaknesses. The villagers' views about the performance of DDMA's during the emergencies further supported this proposition. The villagers told that there were little serious efforts to strengthen the DDMA's at local and district level through which effective DRR governance and resilient communities could be created. In all three districts, governance that could have done activities related to preparedness before the floods, responding to the floods, recovery and rehabilitation of flood affected people and reconstruction of infrastructure and people's properties and their livelihoods did not exist.⁵

The Act can be fully implemented and translated into reality only if PDMA transferred funds to DDMA's who are real implementer of the Act at grassroots level and creator of resilient communities. The results indicate that the dream of resilient and independent communities is far away because independent and fully financed DDMA's have not yet been established.

⁵ The National Disaster Management Authority Act 2010 defines the disaster management (governance) a complete disaster spectrum that includes preparedness, response and rehabilitation; and reconstruction.

All DDMA's have prepared district disaster management plan. Similarly all the relevant departments of target districts have their own plans made part of the district disaster management plan. Yet the officials did not know anything about such plans and even they were not updated once prepared.

Majority of the officials' interviewed were aware about the term DDMA, PDMA and NDMA and the relevant laws and bodies at national and provincial level that dealt with DRR. However, they lacked complete understanding of those laws and powers and functions of each institution under NDMA Act 2010. They were also unaware of HFA. The lower staff was also totally unaware about laws, policies, plans and institutional arrangements for DRR which is not a positive sign. The lower staff is not transferred quite often, keeps history of every activity; therefore, investment in them was required. All officials shared that there were no allocated emergency/DRR funds to support, response and preparedness measures. In emergency situation DCO manages and gets funds from PDMA and provincial governments. The process of obtaining funds from the provincial government is slow and the funds are insufficient. However, at the time of emergency each department spends from its own allocated funds on DRR activities. Some of the officials claimed they warn the communities through different methods which include local/FM radio, drum beating and announcements from mosque loudspeakers. Despite that most of the officials did not know about any early warning system and measures. Most of the officials regretted to share that they do not have any Departmental Contingency Plans in their respective departments.

The performance of officials in nine villages of target district was extremely poor. The officials' attitude towards villagers was inhuman when they contacted them for help during emergencies. The affected villagers in the target districts were not informed by the authorities to vacate villages for safer places. In some villages, authorities did inform the villagers to move for safer places yet they were not provided transport to carry their luggage and other belongings.

Every DDMA is responsible to ensure that it has food security measures at the time of emergency or after it, so that flood affected people mainly poor households may not suffer diseases that kill minors and women because of

malnourishment.⁶ Given poverty, it can safely be said that the number of malnutrition children and women must have increased during disasters. Despite that, DDMAAs did not address this issue seriously during the recent floods.

Provincial government instead of DDMAAs or district governments provided funds to flood affected people to construct their houses. The funds were provided through Watan Card Scheme. Some families were provided Rs 60000 and some Rs 40000 which were insufficient to construct even simple houses. Most of the villagers believe that they lost everything due to absence of government protection and system in place. The villagers spent most of the funds on food to survive in grim economic conditions when everything had flown away with water and land was not ready to cultivate for months. Even the installment process under the Watan Card Scheme was extremely unpleasant and humiliating. The villagers recommended that government should provide transport, food, tents and medical support for avoiding loss of life during disasters. Restoration of infrastructure has remained a big issue which the district governments in the target districts have not been able to address.

The role of NGOs and INGOs during and after the floods was appreciated by the villagers. At some places, villagers received funds for constructing houses. However, most of the NGOs and INGOs support came in the form of ration, cash, trainings, winterization kits, poultry sets and goats. At some places, NGOs role was criticized because they provided more support to influential of the areas, and deprived poor people from their rights.

In disaster preparedness, the role of NGOs was commendable. NGOs trained people in early evacuation, and disaster preparedness. Except few villages, there were no village committees to deal with DRR and there was total absence of community disaster plans. A great majority of the villagers showed concerns that they want to have contact numbers of people with whom they could contact in time of emergency.

7. Policy Recommendations

⁶ Dawn (2013), 'Malnutrition causes 35pc of child deaths in Pakistan' at <http://www.dawn.com/news/1037448/malnutrition-causes-35pc-of-child-deaths-in-pakistan>

An independent DDMA fully equipped with trained people and autonomous in implementing the guidelines as envisaged under HFA and NDMA Act (2010) should be established

Adequate funds and ample human resources should be provided to DDMA to effectively work with other line departments and assess the possible risk and threats looming around. DDMA should be given separate offices instead of virtual department run by a nominee of the DCO on ad hoc.

DDMA should realize the role of other stakeholders and coordinate with them. The DDMA should have a capacity stock and profile of all such stakeholders and regular coordination meetings be conducted so that all stakeholders are on board and on the same pitch.

The role of local communities in DDR related interventions and initiatives be realized. The Disaster Management Plans should be developed with strong consultation of the communities and indigenous wisdom should make part of such plans. In addition to district management plans, the DDMA must ensure the village development plans are also prepared and the village committees are formed, sensitized, trained and equipped to deal with any disasters.

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